

Bears are one of the largest wild animals found in California and many people are thrilled when they get a chance to see one. Less thrilled are those people who have to deal with bears foraging in their garbage cans or breaking into their house or car in search of food.

In California, the black bear is the only bear found in the wild. Black bears range in color from black to cinnamon. Normally shy and not aggressive, these bears become a problem when they start eating people's garbage or being fed. To bears, garbage offers an easy high calorie meal. Feeding bears and allowing them to eat garbage gets them used to being around people and homes. This all too often leads to an incident of property damage or mauling.

Bears are powerful animals and will eat nearly anything. They can rip doors off cars and houses, run faster than you and can become very aggressive when they feel threatened.

PREVENTION MEASURES

FOOD: Food is the most important cause of bear conflicts. Because bears will eat nearly anything, there are many food sources available around homes.

The most important food source is garbage. Keep garbage cans in the garage if possible and always make sure the lids fit tightly. Place cans out for collection in the morning rather than at night. Putting a little bit of ammonia on the garbage reduces the

attractiveness of the garbage's odors. If you must keep your garbage cans outside, secure the cans so they can't be moved. Installing a motion detector security light by the cans can help.

Pets should be fed indoors or only during the day. Bird feeders should be at least 8 feet off the ground and not close to anything a bear can climb. A simple rope and pulley can be used to suspend a feeder from a wire or small tree branch. Sweep up fallen seeds if they start to accumulate under the feeder.

Clean bar-b-que grills after use and store inside.

When cooking, close the kitchen window and leave the curtain shut. Bears know what food looks like!

Removing fallen fruit and harvesting ripe vegetables is also recommended.

WATER: Bears are seldom attracted to homes because of water availability but removing outdoor pet water bowls is advisable because any type of wildlife may be attracted. Bear-proofing ponds and pools is not practical. A locking lid on a hot tub helps prevent bear access and is a good safety practice if small children are present.

SHELTER: Generally, bears are too large to find shelter on typical properties if the homeowner has taken the basic wildlife prevention steps of preventing access to the areas under houses and porches. However, large brush piles left undisturbed can provide shelter. Sheds, garages and homes can also provide shelter if seldom visited although this is uncommon. Large drainage pipes under roads and driveways

offer good shelter to bears. To prevent this, welding bars or a grate across the pipe openings is advised.

CONTROL MEASURES

If a bear is still a problem despite the preventative measures recommended above, consider installing an electric fence or a motion activated noise device in the area where the bear is causing a problem.

Permits from the California Department of Fish and Game can be obtained to trap or shoot the bear. In situations where the bear is considered to be a safety problem, Fish and Game may remove the bear. Trapping, tranquilizing and relocating bears is stressful and may lead to the bear's death. Relocated bears often return and must then be destroyed.

LEGAL STATUS

Bears are classified as a game mammal and a permit is required by Fish and Game prior to shooting or trapping a bear.

COUNTY ORDINANCE

Sections 32.131 to 32.136

In the mountain communities, it is illegal to leave food out for any animal, including pets between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Feeding bears, raccoons, coyotes and other wild animals is prohibited at all times. Food scraps and garbage are required to be in a closed container when outdoors. Violators may be cited.



Black Bear



Front and Rear Paw Prints
Claw marks do not always show.
Prints courtesy of Kim A. Cabrera



San Bernardino County Department of
Agriculture/Weights and Measures
1-800-734-9459

San Bernardino County Animal Control
1-800-472-5609

California Department of Fish and Game
909-597-9823
After Hours Emergency Dispatch
916-445-0045

SOLVING WILDLIFE PROBLEMS

BLACK BEARS



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